

gas, biological weapons, or missiles to deliver them. He has used such terrible weapons before against soldiers, against his neighbors, against civilians. And if left unchecked, he'll use them again.

For 7½ years, United Nations weapons inspectors did a truly remarkable job in forcing Saddam to disclose and destroy weapons he insisted he did not have. But over the past year, Saddam repeatedly has blocked their efforts. Each time with intensive diplomacy backed by the threat of force, we compelled him to back down.

Last month, when he agreed to fully cooperate, I canceled an American military action. But I, along with Prime Minister Tony Blair of Great Britain, made it absolutely clear that if he did not fully cooperate, we would have no choice but to act without further negotiation or warning.

For three weeks, the U.N. inspectors tested Saddam's commitment. He failed the test, hindering and preventing inspections, withholding and destroying documents. As their chairman concluded, the inspectors can no longer do their vital job. Under these circumstances, had we failed to respond, it would have given Saddam a green light to rebuild his arsenal and threaten his neighbors.

I acted quickly because, as my military advisors stressed, the longer we waited, the more time Saddam would have to disperse his forces and protect his arsenal. Our mission is clear: to degrade Saddam's capacity to develop and deliver weapons of mass destruction and threaten the region. Based on reports from the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the CIA Director, I believe the mission is going well.

Now, where do we go from here? Our long-term strategy is clear: First, we stand ready to use force again if Saddam takes threatening action such as seeking to reconstitute his weapons of mass destruction, menacing his neighbors or his own Kurdish citizens, or challenging allied aircraft.

Second, so long as Iraq fails to live up to its obligations, we'll work with the international community to keep the sanctions in place. They have cost Saddam more than \$120 billion, resources he would have devoted to rebuilding his weaponry. At the

same time, we will continue to support the ongoing program to provide humanitarian supplies to the people of Iraq, so that Saddam uses his oil to buy food and medicine, not tanks and missiles.

Finally, we'll strengthen our engagement with Iraqis who want a new government, one that will respect its citizens and live in peace with its neighbors. We must not harbor illusions, however, that change will come easily or quickly. But we should go forward, and we will, with determination, working with opposition groups, strengthening the global consensus for bringing Iraq a government worthy of its people.

As our forces carry out their missions, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines in the Gulf and all around the world, who work every day to defend our freedom, promote stability and democracy, and bring hope. To those forces now engaged in the battle against Saddam Hussein, you have our appreciation for your courage, and our Nation's hopes for your safe and successful return.

To all those in our Armed Forces who will spend this holiday season away from home, away from your loved ones, we thank you for your service. You are helping to ensure a just and peaceful world.

As we enter the season of peace, we remain ever hopeful that one day all nations and all communities will actually live in peace, with tolerance, respect, and civility. There can be no greater gift for our children.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Richard Butler, Executive Chairman, United Nations Special Commission.

Remarks Following the House of Representatives Vote on Impeachment

December 19, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you.

Good afternoon. Let me begin by expressing my profound and heartfelt thanks to Congressman Gephardt and the leadership and all the members of the Democratic caucus

for what they did today. I thank the few brave Republicans who withstood enormous pressure to stand with them for the plain meaning of the Constitution and for the proposition that we need to pull together, to move beyond partisanship, to get on with the business of our country.

I thank the millions upon millions of American citizens who have expressed their support and their friendship to Hillary, to me, to our family, and to our administration during these last several weeks.

The words of the Members here with me, and others who were a part of their endeavor, in defense of our Constitution, were powerful and moving, and I will never forget them. The question is, what are we going to do now?

I have accepted responsibility for what I did wrong in my personal life. And I have invited Members of Congress to work with us to find a reasonable, bipartisan, and proportionate response. That approach was rejected today by Republicans in the House. But I hope it will be embraced by the Senate. I hope there will be a constitutional and fair means of resolving this matter in a prompt manner.

Meanwhile, I will continue to do the work of the American people. We still, after all, have to save Social Security and Medicare for the 21st century. We have to give all our children world-class schools. We have to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights. We have to make sure the economic turbulence around the world does not curb our economic opportunity here at home. We have to keep America the world's strongest force for peace and freedom. In short, we have a lot to do before we enter the 21st century.

And we still have to keep working to build that elusive "one America" I have talked so much about. For 6 years now, I have done everything I could to bring our country together, across the lines that divide us, including bringing Washington together across party lines. Out in the country, people are pulling together. But just as America is coming together, it must look—from the country's point of view—like Washington is coming apart.

I want to echo something Mr. Gephardt said. It is something I have felt strongly all

my life. We must stop the politics of personal destruction. We must get rid of the poisonous venom of excessive partisanship, obsessive animosity, and uncontrolled anger. That is not what America deserves. That is not what America is about.

We are doing well now. We are a good and decent country. But we have significant challenges we have to face. In order to do it right, we have to have some atmosphere of decency and civility, some presumption of good faith, some sense of proportionality and balance in bringing judgment against those who are in different parties. We have important work to do. We need a constructive debate that has all the different voices in this country heard in the Halls of Congress.

I want the American people to know today that I am still committed to working with people of good faith and good will of both parties to do what's best for our country: to bring our Nation together, to lift our people up, to move us all forward together. It's what I've tried to do for 6 years; it's what I intend to do for 2 more, until the last hour of the last day of my term.

So, with profound gratitude for the defense of the Constitution and the best in America that was raised today by the Members here and those who joined them, I ask the American people to move with me to go on from here, to rise above the rancor, to overcome the pain and division, to be a repairer of the breach—all of us—to make this country, as one America, what it can and must be for our children in the new century about to dawn.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:15 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The transcript made available by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chief of Staff John D. Podesta, House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt, and Vice President Al Gore.

Address to the Nation on Completion of Military Strikes in Iraq

December 19, 1998

On Wednesday I ordered our Armed Forces to strike military and strategic targets in Iraq. They were joined by British forces.